

8 Marketing Plan

This Marketing Plan for the Downtown Circulator identifies design and promotion efforts that will be needed to ensure the success of the proposed downtown transportation system.

8.1 *Marketing Plan Overview*

The Marketing Plan is based on an understanding of:

- Target markets – Whom are we trying to serve?
- Service design – How are people expected to make use of the service?
- Operating context – How do circulator routes fit with other transportation modes?
- Marketing context – How can the project best use vehicle graphics, displays, and printed materials to reach visitors and local workers?

The plan includes sections on the following topics:

- **Target Markets** - This examines the context within which proposed bus services will operate. It describes the market groups for whom the service has been designed so that marketing messages can be formulated to reach these target groups. It identifies three principal user groups – tourists, business travelers/conventioners, and downtown workers/shoppers. It also describes how identified groups are expected to utilize the proposed service.
- **Project Name and Identity** - This presents recommendations for a working name and corporate identity for the proposed circulator transportation program. A properly selected name and a well-designed logo can be decisive in determining how people will react to the service. This section includes a matrix of issues and choices designed to help determine the best market position and system name. It includes a choice of logotype and paint scheme applications.
- **Marketing Strategy** - Marketing efforts need to be based on a clearly stated and clearly understood strategy. This section presents a two-page marketing strategy for the circulator project. This concisely written document is designed to keep marketing efforts focused and on track. Its purpose is to remind project partners, bus operators, and marketing staff what the project is doing with its marketing program and why.
- **Individual Marketing Efforts** - This presents a more detailed discussion of the individual marketing efforts identified in the Marketing Strategy. It describes the purpose of each component effort, suggests criteria for measuring success of the effort, and identifies implementation steps, costs, and related issues.

8.2 *Target Markets*

A successful marketing program will show potential users how they will benefit from the service. Therefore, the first task is to identify those users and their transportation needs. This will ensure that marketing messages are formulated to reach the target groups.

The Operations Plan identified two primary potential user groups – visitors and downtown workers/shoppers. For marketing purposes, the visitors group really consists of two distinct sub-groups – tourists and conventioners/business travelers. This section describes the three groups and how they are expected to utilize the proposed services, highlights the relevance of other transportation modes, and discusses possible expectations of the potential partners and reasons to address their concerns in a circulator marketing program.

8.2.1 User Markets

Downtown circulator services can be discussed in terms of three different market groups:

- Tourists
- Conventioneers/business travelers
- Downtown workers and shoppers

Tourists

Tourists travel to the nation's capital to visit monuments, museums, exhibits, government buildings, and other national landmarks. Tourists need access to the capital's attractions – whether from their hotels, from parking areas, or from public transportation terminals. And because many of the distances involved are too far to walk, visitors need a convenient way to travel between various capital attractions.

Tourists also need access to local restaurants and shopping opportunities, both in the downtown and in historic Georgetown. In addition, visitors can be expected to show increasing interest in Washington, D.C.'s downtown, in part because of ongoing restoration and revitalization efforts in the downtown core.

Conventioneers/Business Travelers

A wide assortment of business travelers visit the nation's capital for meetings with elected officials, government agencies, interest groups, and private businesses. Added to this daily flow of business travel are larger groups attending conferences and conventions. This last group is expected to become increasingly significant with the opening of the new Convention Center.

Business travelers need easy access to office locations downtown and on Capitol Hill. They also need convenient transportation to conference sites, to restaurants, and to in-town retail stores. At the same time, business travelers can benefit from quick and direct transportation to and from individual tourist destinations.

Downtown Workers and Shoppers

Downtown workers travel within the downtown core for a wide variety of business purposes. This includes participation in downtown meetings, travel between agency offices, attendance at congressional hearings, and visits to congressional offices. Downtown workers can also benefit from easier access during midday and early evening hours to downtown restaurants and shopping opportunities.

8.2.2 Anticipated Travel Patterns

The downtown circulator transportation includes four routes:

- **White House-Capitol Route** – serves the White House, Foggy Bottom, the State Department area, Federal Triangle, the National Mall, the Capitol, Union Station, and downtown

- **Monuments Route** – serves the Washington Monument, Jefferson, Roosevelt, Korean War, Lincoln, Vietnam Veterans, and World War II Memorials and connects them to Metrorail and the White-House Capitol Route.
- **North-South Route** – serves the new convention center, the downtown area, the National Mall, the L’Enfant Plaza area, and the Southwest Waterfront.
- **K Street Route** – serves Union Station, the new convention center, K Street, and Georgetown.

Anticipated Tourist Travel Patterns

Visitors can be expected to use these bus routes for trips that originate at their hotels, at downtown Metrorail stations, at Union Station, and various parking locations.

Some visitors will be likely to assemble a list of travel destinations. For example, a group of visitors might travel from their hotel in the morning to Capitol Hill to visit the Capitol building, the Library of Congress, and the Supreme Court. They might continue from there to the Smithsonian on the Mall to visit the Air and Space Museum and the National Gallery of Art. After a trip into the downtown or to Union Station for lunch, they might return to the Mall to visit the Museum of Natural History.

The same group might return to the Mall on their second day and transfer to the route that will take them to the Jefferson, Roosevelt, Lincoln, Vietnam Veterans and World War II Memorials.

Other visitors might wish to focus their time and attention on one or two museums or monument sites. These individuals will look for opportunities to travel directly from their starting point to their desired destination. For example, someone with a particular interest in the National Gallery of Art might travel from a downtown hotel to the art museum in the morning, and from the museum to Union Station for lunch. They could go back to the art museum for the afternoon, or into the historic downtown for a walking tour and shopping. This same person might use the circulator service in the evening to travel between their hotel and Georgetown for dinner.

Anticipated Conventioneers/Business Travel Patterns

Business travelers could use the circulator service for travel between their hotels and the Convention Center. They may also use it to travel to Capitol Hill for an appointment with their Congressional representative. Convention participants can be expected to travel to different in-town locations for evening dining. And business travelers may also want to visit one or more destinations on the Mall. Some will have time for a more leisurely visit. Others may have limited time available and may wish to travel directly to and from a destination such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Anticipated Downtown Worker and Shopper Travel Patterns

An individual who works in an office west of the White House might use the circulator service to travel to a Congressional hearing or to a staff meeting on Capitol Hill. Similarly, Congressional staffers might use it to attend meetings downtown.

Federal employees might use circulator routes to travel between agency locations, avoiding a need to wait for less frequent employee van service.

An employee of the Department of Transportation in southeast Washington might use the 7th Street bus to travel to Chinatown for lunch. Or they could use this route to reach the downtown

center for late afternoon shopping before boarding Metrorail downtown for their afternoon commute.

8.2.3 Other Transportation Modes

While some potential users will have hotel accommodations on the circulator routes, and some area workers may live within walking distance of the service, a significant percentage of visitors and downtown workers will travel to and from the downtown using some other mode of transportation.

A key function of new circulator services will be to provide visitors and workers with frequent and easy access to in-town destinations after they have arrived in the downtown by Metrorail, Metrobus, commuter train, or private automobile.

Each travel mode can be seen as a different sub-market for the circulator program. And each mode can be addressed separately for visitors and resident workers. The different subgroups are likely to differ to some degree in (1) their need for alternate transportation, (2) their awareness of the service, and (3) their willingness to utilize the new service.

Metrorail and commuter rail users, both visitors and commuting workers, are probably the prime market for circulator routes. These people have demonstrated a willingness to use an alternative to the automobile, yet they may be unfamiliar with regular city Metrobuses and reluctant to try them. Much of the circulator marketing program should probably be aimed at these Metrorail and passenger train riders.

The importance of the Metrorail market for tourists can be seen by the treatment of Metrorail in visitor guide books and tourist maps. Most of these publications include Metro's graphic presentation of the Metrorail route map. Guide books include suggested itineraries that rely on the Metrorail system for touring capital attractions.

This suggests that links to Metrorail and Amtrak stations should be prominently featured in maps presenting circulator bus routes. Graphics should be designed for utilization in private guides and maps. Metrorail cars and stations may be a prime location for promotional display advertising.

While some individuals who commute by private auto may be persuaded to use the new service, these people currently demonstrate either limited awareness of the benefits of the existing alternatives or a reluctance to give up the privacy of their cars. Individuals who place a high priority on their privacy are likely to continue relying on private taxis for cross-town travel. If they can be persuaded to try the new service, this is most likely to be for rides that are short and quick and that involve little or no waiting.

Current Metrobus riders are likely to switch to the new service for trips that are faster than existing alternatives, or because less waiting time is involved. Experienced bus users are probably the most likely group to understand the benefits of the new service and the most willing to take advantage of it. Advertisements in Metrobuses may play an important role in informing current bus riders.

8.2.4 Needs and Expectations of Project Partners

This section identifies issues that may be of concern to potential project partners. To ensure participation by partners, and a positive response from potential users, a circulator marketing program should attempt to address as many of these issues as possible.

Possible partners addressed briefly in this section include:

- United States Congress
- National Park Service
- Other Federal Agencies/GSA
- Metro
- DC Convention Center
- Downtown Businesses
- Georgetown Businesses
- NCPC and other planners

United States Congress and National Hospitality

Visitor facilities serve as a welcome center for U.S. citizens who travel to their nation's capital. The quality of visitors' experiences reflects upon their sense of the quality of their government. Members of Congress pay attention to the hospitality provided to constituents who visit their offices. This should also hold true for their constituents' overall experience with national landmarks, monuments, and facilities in the capital.

The name, identity, and image of the new transportation program should suggest that it is an integral part of a high-quality visitor experience.

National Park Service

The mission of the National Park Service is (1) to protect natural and cultural resources and (2) to ensure a quality visitor experience. Traffic congestion, tour bus parking, and automobile overcrowding threaten the Park's resources. Traffic congestion and related obstacles that interfere with easy public access diminish the quality of the visitor experience.

While the National Park Service is working separately to address these problems in the nation's capital, there is considerable overlap with concerns expressed by the city, the business community, the transit authority, and federal agencies. Circulator bus routes are likely to meet many of the needs that have been identified by the National Park Service.

Federal Agencies/GSA

Shuttle routes have been designed in part to meet the needs of federal employees who must travel regularly between Washington, D.C., office locations. The Circulator is likely to provide a more cost effective, more frequent, and more convenient alternative than existing private shuttle programs to federal agencies and individual workers.

Metro

New circulator routes may be able to play a role in decreasing the heavy demand on key Metrorail transfer points. Peak hour transfer demands at Metro Center and Gallery Place often result in delays as crowds wait for access to escalators between rail platforms. Circulator routes may be able to lesson overcrowding, particularly by providing a direct route for commuters traveling between Union Station and the Smithsonian and L'Enfant Plaza Metrorail stations.

DC Convention Center

As described above, circulator shuttles can play an important role in accommodating the needs of convention participants – for access to the Convention Center itself, as well as tourist destinations, restaurants, shopping, and visits to Capitol Hill offices.

Downtown Businesses

The capital's restored and revitalized historic downtown is strategically located between the Convention Center and the Mall, and between the White House and the Capitol Building. Frequent and convenient transportation between these locations will result in improved access to the downtown center, and increased awareness of the dining, shopping, and cultural opportunities it has to offer.

Georgetown Businesses

A circulator program that includes the downtown, Capitol Hill, the Convention Center, national monuments, and the Mall can serve as an expansion to the successful Georgetown Metro Connection. This should result in increased use of Georgetown routes, especially by visitors and federal workers.

Regional Planning Agencies

Circulator bus routes can help reduce traffic congestion, particularly in the Mall area. They may also be able to play a role in reducing the visual impact of school bus, charter bus, and automobile parking along the roadways bordering the Mall.

8.3 Project Name and Identity

In many respects, selecting an identity is one of the most important decisions to be made in marketing the new service. The project name will help determine the circulator's "place" in the market. A properly selected name and a well-designed logo can be decisive in determining how people will react to the service. It will also play a role in determining how all other marketing efforts will be received.

The first part of this section presents a matrix of issues and choices designed to help determine the best market position and system name. The second part presents and explains an example project name. The third discusses the possible use of a supporting subtext or slogan. The fourth part presents a choice of logotype and paint scheme applications. And the last proposes names for individual bus routes.

8.3.1 Market Positioning

A danger for the proposed bus service is that it will be invisible, that it will blend into the city's existing traffic, making little or no impression on visitors or downtown workers.

The circulator program needs distinctive and highly visible graphics. The service needs to appeal to tourists, without being mistaken for just one more guided tour or trolley bus service. And it needs to appeal to downtown workers as an important addition to the city's transportation infrastructure, without being mistaken for a minor expansion of the regular Metrobus system.

Three fundamental decisions need to be made in positioning the service in the marketplace:

- Should the name and identity be aimed at visitors or downtown workers?
- Should one name be selected, or are four separate identifies needed?
- How closely should the new service be associated with Metro?

These are difficult questions because arguments can be made for opposing positions.

Marketing for Visitors or Workers?

The transient nature of the visitor market presents a major marketing challenge for the project. The project needs an affordable way to reach a constantly changing public.

Most visitors will spend only a handful of days in the region. Tourists need to understand at a glance that the service is designed for visitors. The project is unlikely to be able to afford to pay for the level of TV, radio, or newspaper exposure that would be required to reach this transient market through traditional advertising media.

Visitors need to understand that the service is relevant for them as soon as they see it. Immediate comprehension is less important for residents because they will see the service at work in their community and they will come to understand its relevance for them over time.

On the other hand, the program needs to be positioned as more than a tourist service. Circulator routes are designed to accomplish much more than accommodating tourists. Circulator service is an integral part of a revitalized downtown. It is designed to offer new ways to experience the capital core – by local workers as well as transient guests. An important sub-message is that the capital core includes the historic downtown – along with national landmarks and government buildings.

The ideal name and identity will accomplish both missions at the same time: It will present a fast, frequent, and direct travel mode that offers easy transportation access within a capital core that includes the historic downtown. And it will show tourists and other visitors that this service is easy to use, visitor-friendly, and designed for tourists.

One Name or Four Names?

The circulator program is designed to serve widely divergent target markets. And the four proposed routes are very different from each other.

- The White House-Capitol Route will benefit visitors, but it will also provide important benefits for District workers.
- The Monuments Route is clearly intended for visitors.
- The North-South Route will serve dual visitor and District worker functions.
- The K Street route will be used primarily, at least during the daytime, by local workers.

The need to present a clear understanding of the benefits of each service component supports an argument for four different route-specific identities. Route specific names can help visitors and residents understand where each route goes and what it has to offer.

On the other hand, four names will greatly complicate the task of establishing public awareness and public acceptance of this new approach to in-town mobility. A rule of thumb in marketing is that it takes seventeen impressions before a potential customer gains full recognition of a new product. With four routes, this outreach task could grow to 68 impressions. And the situation will become even more complicated if additional routes are added in the future.

The best approach appears to be to establish one shared identity that captures the key features of the service and to choose names for individual routes that will be presented as components of a unified capital core transportation system.

How Closely Aligned with Metro?

Arguments can be made for clearly separating circulator services from existing Metrobus operations. Visitors may be fearful that they will become lost in a big and complex urban transit system. They may also fear that regular transit drivers and other passengers will be impatient and unsympathetic to visitors who do not know their way.

Some downtown workers may have already decided that regular Metrobuses are not their preferred travel mode. Some may feel that city buses are too slow, or that the route structure is too complicated. Others may perceive the service as too expensive or too infrequent. Some suburban commuters simply may not be used to riding buses.

The goal of enhancing the image of the historic downtown provides another reason for creating a new and separate identity for the circulator program. It will be more difficult to use the circulator network to alter the vision of downtown if it uses a name that is too closely linked with the existing public transit system.

On the other hand, there are important reasons for associating the new service with the Metrorail network. Many visitors already utilize the Metrorail system. Tour guides and visitor maps highlight the Metrorail system as the best way to travel to and from key capital destinations. Probably the best way to inform visitors about circulator bus routes will be to include a circulator route map and related information in Metrorail publications.

Close association with the Metro system can suggest a number of other important messages for visitors. It will help them understand that the service provides direct and fast transportation, not a rambling circuitous tour. It will suggest that this is an affordable transportation alternative, not a high-priced packaged tour. And it can reassure visitors that the program is part of the official infrastructure of the nation's capital.

Close association with Metrorail may also be important for regional commuters. Metrorail riders may be more inclined to utilize a downtown bus service if it is presented as a downtown enhancement of their high-speed rail network.

8.3.2 Suggested System Name

A wide assortment of possible names were considered for the Circulator. Although the project during its design phase has become known as the *Downtown Circulator*, this name may not be the most appropriate system identity, in part because it is too long, and in part because it may suggest to some potential users a slow and circuitous transportation mode.

- *MetroLink*, *Metro Express*, *Metro XP*, and *Metro Explorer* were rejected because they position the service too closely with existing transit operations.
- *MonuMetro* was recognized as providing a strong dual message: (1) visitor transportation and (2) fast and direct service. However, this was rejected as an overall system name because it gives only a partial picture of what the four proposed bus routes have to offer. Neither the K Street nor the 7th Street routes serve "monuments."
- *Capital Explorer* was given serious consideration, but was ultimately rejected because it is too visitor oriented and because it fails



to show that the new service is part of a revitalized and fast-paced downtown center.

- *Capital Connection* was rejected because it is too generic and because it lacks the spark of excitement needed to attract visitors and residents to the new service.

The name DC ZIP was suggested as a possible identity for the service as is used in the examples in this section. While ongoing efforts are underway to develop a final identity for the service, the DC ZIP name illustrates many of the characteristics that an identity for the circulator should possess. This name has a number of significant strengths:

- The name itself is short and quick, with a suggested spark of excitement.
- It suggests rides that are short and quick, not long commuter trips or circuitous tour bus excursions.
- Combining DC and ZIP reinforces the idea that the District of Columbia and its historic downtown are experiencing an exciting transformation.
- Future riders will be likely to use the service name as both a noun (“The easiest way to get there is to just take the ZIP.”) and a verb (“I don’t need you to pick me up, I’ll just ZIP it from downtown.”)

It is interesting to contrast DC ZIP with the name used for similar west coast transit services – *The Dash*. *The Dash* is a comparatively empty name. It includes no sense of geographic place. It suggests a fast movement, but includes no inference about arriving anywhere. Moreover, a dash is a punctuation mark used when a speaker runs out of things to say.

In contrast, DC ZIP suggests energy, electrical spark, connection, and success (“I can zip that off in a matter of minutes.”) It tells a story unique to the nation’s capital, while stressing that the city is alive, and not just a collection of national landmarks and monuments.

Certainly other factors, such as the use of the term in the past by the US Postal Service, may require further consideration and refinement of the name and identity. However, DC ZIP is an working title that illustrates the desired characteristics in an identity for the circulator.

8.3.3 Possible Subheadings or Slogans

It would be possible to include subheadings or slogans to accompany a DC ZIP logotype. An extra phrase or message could be included in the vehicle paint scheme and in all other logo applications to highlight or explain additional features of the new transportation service.

Since the name DC ZIP is somewhat weighted toward the downtown worker market, a supporting phrase or slogan could highlight tourist-friendly aspects of the service. A slogan could emphasize connections with Metrorail, or supporting text could focus attention to the historic downtown.

A broad selection of possible candidates was considered. Possible subheadings and their strengths and weaknesses are presented in the Table 8-1.

As discussed in the following sub-section, pictures might do a better job of providing the desired subtext. This may be especially true for the task of underscoring the relevance of the service for tourists. None of the slogans considered above do a particularly good job of conveying this important message.

8.3.4 Logotype and Vehicle Paint Scheme Applications

The Downtown Circulator Partner Group wants Circulator buses to be highly visible and easily recognizable. Vehicles need to be readily distinguished from regular Metrobuses and other charter and shuttle services. Partners suggested using bright bold colors such as red or purple, or possibly an environmentally friendly use of the color green.

The partner group indicated a willingness to consider vinyl graphics on a limited amount of window space, while cautioning that full vehicle wraps were unacceptable to city officials and bus riders in the District. The partners felt that vinyl applications on windows should not interfere with people's ability to see into buses from the sidewalk. It was suggested that buses might be effective with a single solid color. It was also suggested that exterior advertising on buses be reserved as a possible future option.

Three sets of paint scheme alternatives were prepared using the DC ZIP identity. These are shown in Figure 8-1. The proposed logotype, shown in each set, highlights the word ZIP in gold, with DC presented in a light shade of gray. Within each set are examples that use different colors and, in some cases, different supporting phrases.

- One set of alternatives includes pictures of the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials at the front and back off the bus, with DC ZIP under the windows between the two monuments. These alternatives include a small amount of vinyl on windows in the front and back, with all of the middle windows left vinyl free.
- A second set of options leaves the windows completely free of any vinyl covering.

Figure 8-1: Paint Scheme Alternatives



Table 8-1: Possible Circulator Name Subheadings

Subheading	Strengths	Weaknesses
Capital Connector	This suggests links with Metrorail and other transportation modes, as well as cross-town connections for meetings and other purposes.	It is very generic and provides limited new information about the nature or quality of the links involved.
Capital Connections	This slogan suggests multiple type of links.	It remains generic and may be seen as a cliché.
In-town Connector	This helps explain where the service operates and how it differs from other transit services.	It is flat and lacks excitement. Both words are too generic. This slogan could be used in any city.
Downtown Connector	This places the spotlight directly on the downtown center. It suggests that all trips lead eventually to downtown.	While this is an important role for the service, it presents only a partial picture. This slogan may not be appropriate for visitor markets.
Capital Core Express	This provides a better description of where the service operates. It also reinforces the suggestion that the service is fast and direct.	Some visitors may not understand the reference to “capital core.” And “Express” tends to imply limited-stop service on lengthy travel routes.
Metro Link Service or Metro Link Express	These candidates highlight the idea that the DC ZIP provides transportation for Metrorail users.	This may be too close an association with Metro. “Service” is too flat. “Express” may not be appropriate.
Single ride \$.50 All day \$2	If this fare information is included in the vehicle paint scheme, it will greatly increase visitor and worker understanding of the nature of the service. The low all-day pass price will reinforce the message to visiting families that this service is meant for them.	This requires displaying only some of the available fares. (Passes would be marketed separately.) Highlighting prices may degrade the overall sophistication of vehicle graphics.

With all of the paint scheme variations, it is recommend that the sides of project buses be kept free of outside advertising signs. If advertising revenue is needed, it is suggested that one of two strategies be pursued:

- 1) Exterior advertising can be limited to vinyl wraps on the backs of project buses only. Examples of “fullback” and “supertail” vinyl applications can be seen at http://www.obie.com/prod_gallery/pg-trans.html. These vinyl applications are typically sold for periods of at least six months. Experience elsewhere in the country suggests that when this type of artwork appears on the backs of buses, the advertising

market can become energized fairly quickly. The project is likely to be able to generate more revenue from these applications than from sign frames on the sides of vehicles.

- 2) An alternative approach is to look for a single corporate sponsor and to apply that company's logo to project vehicles for a full year or longer. This strategy was followed at Acadia National Park where Island Explorer buses included a logo for L.L. Bean with the slogan "Helping to Protect Our National Parks." L.L. Bean has pledged a total of \$1 million over four years to help fund the Island Explorer shuttle bus project.

8.3.5 Names for Individual Bus Routes

Names for individual bus routes can be displayed in a number of key locations, including:

- Electronic destination signs on the front, side, and back of project buses
- Route-specific bus stop signs
- Schematic diagrams of system routes
- Full system route map

A variety of different approaches can be taken to naming routes. For example, names could be accompanied by route numbers or color designations, or both to avoid any confusion with color-coded Metrorail lines or numbered Metrobus routes.

8.4 Marketing Strategy

Marketing efforts need to be based on a clearly stated and clearly understood strategy. This is necessary so that focus and purpose of marketing efforts do not become lost among other day-to-day management issues and decisions.

A successful marketing program requires consistent effort over an extended period of time. A concisely written marketing strategy will help keep marketing efforts focused and on track. It will remind project partners, bus operators, and paid marketing staff what the project is doing with its marketing program and why.

Figure 8-2 presents a marketing strategy for the circulator project. This marketing strategy is designed to include:

- 1) A clear statement of the purpose of the marketing program
- 2) A statement summarizing how this purpose will be accomplished
- 3) A brief description of target audiences
- 4) A list of individual marketing efforts to be employed
- 5) A statement of the transit program's market position
- 6) A description of the resources that will be devoted to the marketing effort

The marketing strategy provides an outline for more detailed discussions of individual marketing efforts in the following section.

8.5 Individual Marketing Efforts

This section presents a more detailed discussion of individual marketing efforts included in the Marketing Strategy. It describes the purpose of each component effort, suggests criteria for

Figure 8-2 - Marketing Strategy

Marketing Strategy For Downtown Circulator Services

The purpose of the circulator marketing program will be to inform visitors, workers, and residents about the new Downtown Circulator services, to ensure that people understand where buses operate and how they can benefit from the service, and to generate acceptance and usage by tourists, business travelers, downtown workers.

This will be accomplished by

- Developing an identity that suggests benefits for tourists, business travelers, and downtown workers, while also calling attention to the capital's revitalized historic downtown center
- Developing an identity and supporting graphic materials that differentiate the service from regular transit alternatives, while suggesting that it provides important links within the existing transportation network
- Designing a vehicle paint scheme that is highly visible and that provides visitors and other downtown pedestrians with a clear picture of why the service is special
- Developing distinctive route maps in both a schematic and a full street-map format
- Developing route-specific bus stop signs
- Designing an internet web site for the new service, plus graphic elements that can be incorporated in the web sites of neighboring businesses and agencies
- Encouraging the National Park Service, Smithsonian, the downtown BID, and others to include the routes on maps displayed on the Mall and on downtown streets
- Developing graphic concepts that can be incorporated in Metrorail maps and brochures and in privately published DC maps and tour guides
- Producing a full color visitor guide and map in a single-sheet tabloid format for distribution in hotels, at Metrorail stations, and on the Mall

Target audiences include

- (1) Workers who commute to downtown Washington via Metrorail but who do not use Metrobuses for travel to cross-town meetings or for access to lunch or shopping downtown
- (2) Workers who commute to downtown Washington via private automobile and who are unfamiliar with cross-town travel options
- (3) Workers who commute to downtown via Metrobus who can benefit from faster, more frequent, and more direct bus links
- (4) Visitors staying in hotels within the immediate downtown
- (5) Visitors who use Metrorail to reach Capital tourist destinations
- (6) Visitors who attempt to reach Capital tourist destinations with their private automobiles

- (7) Convention Center attendees and other business travelers who need transportation to and from hotels, restaurants, Capitol Hill offices, Smithsonian museums, and national monuments
- (8) Information center staff, hotel clerks, and others who answer visitors' questions about capital attractions
- (9) Authors and publishers of Washington, DC travel guides
- (10) Federal agencies and private employers who can save money by encouraging their workers to use low-cost shuttles instead of taxis and private shuttles
- (11) Residents who conduct personal business and shop downtown

Marketing vehicles to be employed will include:

- A name and logo for the new service
- Vehicle graphics and paint schemes
- A schematic route map designed for use in Metrorail promotions, in Smithsonian and National Park Service publications, and elsewhere
- Route-specific bus stop signs
- Web site promotions, with graphic elements that can be used by neighboring agencies and businesses in their own web sites
- Promotional posters for display in Metrorail stations and in rail cars
- A single-sheet tabloid "Visitor Guide" that will include maps and related visitor information about how to take advantage of the Circulator service
- Counter-top displays and outdoor newspaper vending machines for distribution of the tabloid visitor guide
- Ticket, multiple-day, and monthly pass sales to individuals, groups, government agencies, and private employers.

The market position will be a convenient, easy-to use, and inexpensive transportation service utilizing clean-fuel vehicles to offer tourists, business travelers, and downtown workers direct, frequent, and easy-to-understand access to key Washington, DC destinations, including dining and shopping opportunities in Georgetown and a revitalized historic downtown.

measuring the level of success, and identifies implementation steps and related issues that will need to be addressed. A rough estimate of project expenses is also included.

The marketing strategy includes nine component efforts. Name and logo for the new service and vehicle graphics and paint schemes were addressed above. This section covers the remaining seven items:

- Route Map Schematic
- Route-specific Bus Stop Signs
- Web Site Promotions
- Posters for Metrorail Stations and Metrorail Cars
- Design of Tabloid *Visitor Guide*
- *Visitor Guide* Distribution
- Ticket and Pass Sales

8.5.1 Route Map Schematic

The Problem and the Solution

The project needs an easy, obvious, and affordable way to educate potential riders about the benefits of circulator bus services. One of the most basic tasks is to publicize the routes involved. Potential users need to understand where buses operate and what locations they serve before they can decide to take advantage of the service.

It is important to come up with a low-cost method for very wide exposure of basic route structure information. This is especially true for visitors who will spend only a handful of days in the region. The project is unlikely to be able to afford to pay for the level of TV, radio, or newspaper exposure that would be required to reach this transient market.

The solution is to develop a schematic route map that can be displayed in a wide variety of locations. This map should be designed to accompany and complement the widely-recognized schematic presentation of Metrorail routes. A key objective will be to have the circulator map displayed along with the Metrorail map – in Metro posters and printed materials as well as in guidebooks, maps, web sites, and other media that include the Metrorail map.

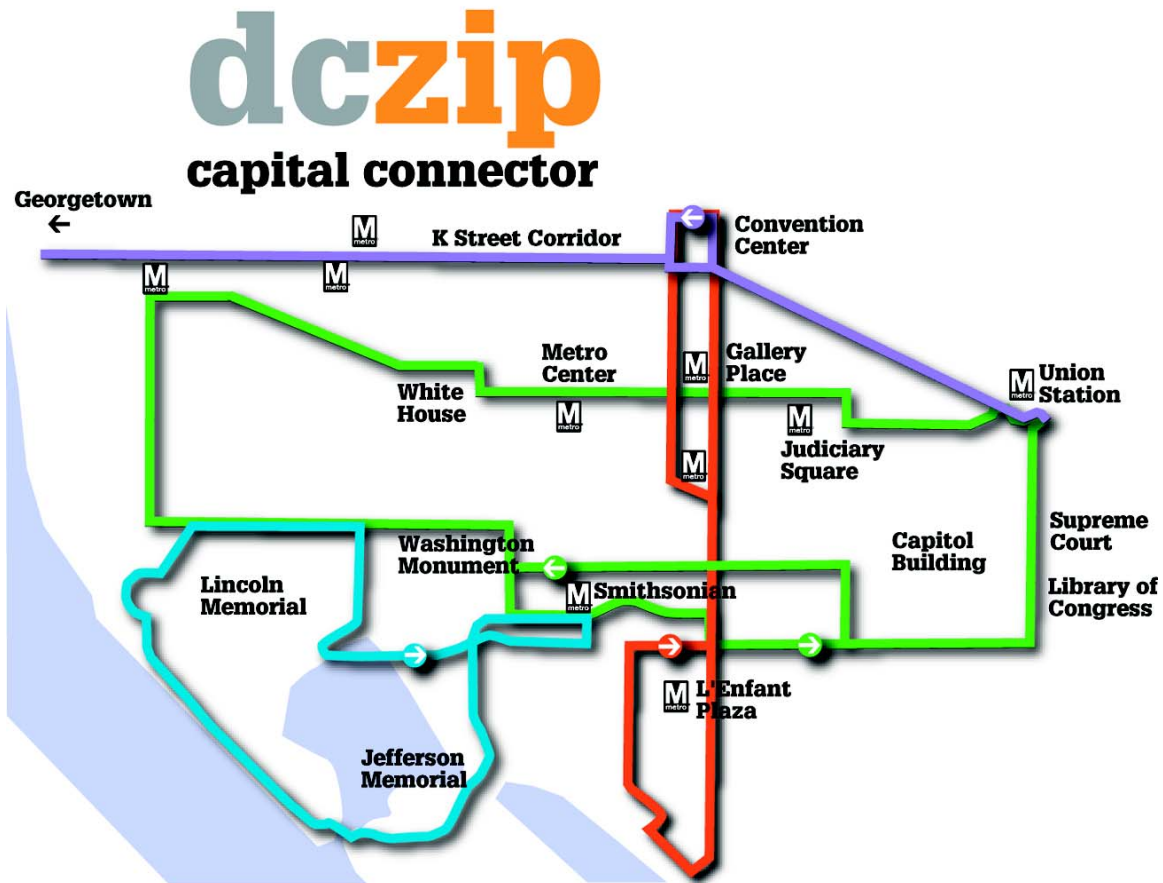
This map must be clear, instantly recognized, and easily understood. And the graphic elements must be simple enough to allow it to be included in other publications without interfering with the design of those pieces. An example is shown as Figure 8-3.

Criteria for Measuring the Success of the Effort

The success of this effort can be measured by identifying the locations, web sites, and publications where the circulator graphic is displayed. A key measure will be whether this route map begins to appear in Metrorail posters and brochures. Other locations that should be assessed include:

- Visitor displays at train stations and airports
- Smithsonian and National Park Service displays and brochures
- Privately published tourist maps and guidebooks
- Web sites for hotels and other regional businesses

Figure 8-3: Example Route Map Schematic



Implementation Strategies

A key implementation step will be to work with Metrorail's marketing department to develop a design that will fit with a full range of Metrorail promotions. Once this objective has been met, efforts will be needed to make this graphic available to public and private agencies, businesses, guide book authors, and map publishers.

Estimated Cost

Finalizing the graphic design in Figure 8-3 may cost around \$3,000. A completely different design may cost more. Ongoing efforts to distribute this graphic element to agencies and publications throughout the region should involve roughly one-quarter of the time of a full-time marketing staff member.

Implementation Calendar

The route map graphic should be completed eight to twelve months prior to implementation of the service. This will allow lead-time for WMATA, the Smithsonian, the National Park Service, and private groups to make adjustments to posters, information displays, brochures, web sites, and visitor publications.

Since the project may be implemented in stages, it will be important to develop a route schematic that shows additional routes as they are added or planned.

8.5.2 Route-specific Bus Stop Signs

The Problem and the Solution

Tourists and business travelers need to feel comfortable and secure when they use the service. Downtown workers need to be able to board and disembark effortlessly, with no uncertainty about how the service works. There should be no unanswered questions for these user groups about where they need to stand to board, where they can get off, the direction in which buses are headed, or what key destinations are served.

One way to create and reinforce an understanding of the service will be to design graphically interesting bus stop signs that include essential route information. Different levels of information can be displayed, depending on the size and complexity of the sign.

At a minimum, bus stop signs should display the system logo, along with a route number. These signs will be more informative if they include route names.

It may be possible to employ larger signs that include one or more of the following:

- End point destinations to indicate direction of travel
- A list of key intermediate locations served
- A map of the individual route
- A schematic map of all four routes

More complex displays may need to be limited to a select number of locations.

Criteria for Measuring the Success of the Effort

The effectiveness of the signs and the information presented should be evaluated through passenger surveys. Overall awareness and effectiveness could be assessed through general visitor surveys and surveys of downtown employees.

Implementation Strategies

It will be important to work with city officials and regional planning agencies to develop bus stop designs that are appropriate for a variety of landscapes – the downtown, Georgetown, the Mall, Capitol Hill, and national monuments.

It may be necessary to limit the size and information content of bus stop signs. To fit with existing signage, it may be necessary to incorporate more detailed information in existing signage implemented by the Business Improvement District, the Smithsonian, and the National Park Service.

Once design issues have been resolved, implementation steps include

- Identifying bus stop locations
- Purchasing and installing basic bus stop signs
- Changing existing displays to include Circulator information

Estimated Cost

The design of a basic bus stop sign should cost under \$2,000. Adjustments to BID, Smithsonian, and National Park Service information displays will be more expensive, but these changes are likely to be handled directly by the agencies involved. The design of graphic elements might cost another \$2,500.

The estimated cost to purchase and install 120 bus stop signs and posts is \$20,000.

Implementation Calendar

Bus stop signs and posts should be acquired at least 3 or 4 months prior to implementation. These signs should be installed roughly one month prior to the start of service.

More lead time will be needed for more complex informational displays. Graphic elements should be provided to participating partners at least 8-12 months prior to the expected implementation date.

8.5.3 Web Site Promotions

The Problem and the Solution

A large percentage of vacationers and business travelers use the Internet to help plan their trips. Visitors should be aware of their in-town travel options before they begin their journeys. Two Internet web site design tasks are needed:

- Develop a web site that presents detailed information about routes and services, along with suggestions about how visitors can utilize the service to enhance their stay in the capital
- Design and distribute graphic elements and links that can be included in the web sites of hotels, businesses, agencies, and other project partners.

Information for other web sites should be made available in two formats: (1) minimal information and graphics for those who wish to offer a direct link to the web site and (2) a concise yet complete picture of shuttle services for businesses who prefer not to include outside links on their web pages.

Criteria for Measuring the Success of the Effort

To some extent, the success of this effort can be measured by evaluating traffic levels at the system's web site. Another important measure will be to identify a list of important District of Columbia and tourist industry web sites, and to show which of these sites include links to the site or information about the bus service.

Implementation Strategies

Four basic implementation steps should be included in this effort:

- Design a web site with maps and basic information about circulator services.
- Add supporting information, including sample itineraries and feature stories that explain how to take advantage of the service. (These web pages can draw upon stories and graphics prepared for the tabloid publication discussed below)
- Design individual graphic elements for use in other web sites.
- Meet with project partners and neighboring businesses to distribute web materials and to encourage them to use these graphic elements in their sites.

Estimated Cost

Design of a web site and supporting graphic elements should cost an estimated \$10,000. Web site hosting should cost roughly \$1,000 per year. Meetings with partners and neighboring businesses might involve roughly one-quarter of the time of a full-time marketing staff person.

Implementation Calendar

New and refined plans should continue to be added to the existing BID web site as they are developed. Design of a new web site may take three to six months. This should be completed at least eight to ten months in advance of service implementation. This will allow time for a marketing staff person to show this site to partners and other interested businesses. These parties should be contacted at least three months prior to the start of service.

8.5.4 Posters for Metrorail Stations and Rail Cars**The Problem and the Solution**

Areas residents and visitors need to be made aware of circulator routes and services. They need to understand the various fare alternatives and the benefits offered by the new service.

Current Metrorail users represent a key target market for the new service. Local commuters who arrive by rail can benefit from better access to cross-town meetings, as well as in-town travel to lunch sites and shopping. Many Metrorail riders recognize the benefits of well-designed transit alternatives, while remaining unsure about or reluctant to try regular city Metrobuses.

Visitors who use Metrorail to travel to downtown or the Mall can benefit from information about Circulator opportunities.

Posters on Metro trains and in Metrorail stations provide a key opportunity to reach current Metrorail riders. Commuters and tourists can read information in Metrorail cars as they travel into the city center. Probably the best strategy for in-station posters would be to feature this information at primary tourist destinations and transfer points. The best candidates are probably Union Station, the Smithsonian, L'Enfant Plaza, Metro Center, and Gallery Place.

Criteria for Measuring the Success of the Effort

A simple measure of the success of implementing this task is the number of posters placed in rail cars and in stations. Evaluating the effectiveness of the messages displayed is a more difficult task. This can be done through onboard surveys, focus group discussions, visitor surveys, or interviews with individual tourist groups. An alternate approach to reaching commuters would be through employee surveys distributed at individual businesses or federal agencies.

Implementation Strategies

The key task for this effort is the design of appropriate posters for rail cars and stations. It may be appropriate to develop two different sets of designs. One design could provide basic map, fare, and service information. A separate set of designs could offer promotional messages highlighting special advantages of the new service for particular user groups.

A poster could feature downtown lunch opportunities: "When it's time for lunch, ZIP it downtown." Another could highlight access to Capitol Hill from downtown and the Mall. A third could feature easy access to popular tourist destinations.

A variation of this approach would be to develop partnership promotions. For example, a Metrorail poster for a special Smithsonian exhibit could include a message and graphic elements for the Circulator.

Estimated Cost

Design of display posters should cost between \$3,000 and \$10,000, depending on the number of different messages involved. Costs for sign placements will depend on the scope of the advertising effort.

Implementation Calendar

Poster designs should be developed roughly 10-12 months prior to the start of the service. Placement schedules should be developed with Metrorail at least six months prior to service implementation, with posters appearing in Metrorail cars and stations one or two months before the service begins.

It may be appropriate to begin with basic route and fare information, phasing in promotional messages over a one or two year period.

8.5.5 Design of Tabloid Visitor Guide

The Problem and the Solution

Visitors can benefit from more detailed information about Circulator routes and services. A printed Visitor Guide can help tourists and business travelers gain a better understanding of where vehicles operate and how they can utilize and benefit from the service.

One of the best ways to display information about visitor transportation services is through the use of a single-sheet full-color tabloid publication. A key advantage is the ability to produce high-quality color graphics in large quantities for a very low unit cost. The low unit cost is made possible by the use of a newspaper Web press.

A single sheet yields four pages measuring 11.5 by 16.5 inches, with a final document that folds in half to 8.25 by 11.5 inches. The centerfold provides ample space for a detailed full-color map of the service area. A recent innovation is to a design centerfold transit map using hand-colored satellite photography as a base.

The front and back covers of the tabloid publication can then be used to provide supporting articles about the bus service. This can include feature articles about developments in the downtown, information about Smithsonian and National Park Service programs, and suggested itineraries for combining Metrorail and the DC ZIP to visit capital landmarks and attractions.

A tabloid format can also provide space for display advertising for project underwriters. This type of publication also allows space to be set aside to provide educational information about guided-tours operated by National Park Service concessionaires.

Criteria for Measuring the Success of the Effort

One measure of the effectiveness of this type of publication is the willingness of project partners to distribute it to their customers and guests. For example, if the Visitor Guide is well designed and helpful to guests, hotels are more likely to display it in their lobbies or to hand it out to guests. Key partners in this effort are likely to be hotels, shops, restaurants, the Smithsonian Institution, and the National Park Service. Distribution efforts are discussed in more detail below.

The overall effectiveness of the printed piece can be evaluated through passenger surveys, general visitor surveys, focus groups, or interviews with individual tourists. A less scientific approach is to watch visitors as they use outdoor displays of centerfold information. The Island Explorer project at Acadia National Park has used observations and passenger surveys to improve the presentation of bus routes and schedules in its tabloid publication.

Implementation Strategies

The biggest implementation step is the design of a tabloid newspaper. Particular attention needs to be paid to the presentation of full-color maps and schedule information. This information needs to be readily understandable by visitors who are not necessarily experienced transit users.

Cover design and supporting stories can be equally important. A tabloid format gives project partners a unique ability to determine the market position for the service. Supporting stories can help determine how visitors and local businesses respond to the service. And it can call their attention to related developments in the core area.

Estimated Cost

Design of an initial tabloid publication might cost roughly \$10,000. Once key design elements have been established, editions for subsequent years or seasons should cost between \$3,000 and \$5,000.

By using a Web press and high quality newsprint, unit costs should be roughly \$.05 per item. This means that a press run of 100,000 would cost roughly \$5,000. With a \$.05 unit cost, a run of 1.5 million would cost \$75,000. Some savings are likely to result with a press run of this size.

Implementation Calendar

If circulator routes are implemented in phases, the best approach may be to delay production of a tabloid Visitor Guide until the White House Capitol Route is introduced. Design of a tabloid publication will likely take roughly three months. More time may be needed if display advertising is going to be included. Since numerous partners and agencies may have input to the draft publication, it would probably be best to add another three months to consider comments from stakeholders.

8.5.6 Visitor Guide Distribution**The Problem and the Solution**

Brochures that sit in a storeroom in opened boxes accomplish nothing for a transit project. It is important to have a plan for effective distribution before going to the trouble and expense of designing and printing a *Visitor Guide*.

There are a variety of approaches to distributing tabloid transit guides. Most of these strategies can be combined to help promote the Downtown Circulator.

- The project can purchase clear plastic easels for display and distribution of a tabloid Visitor Guide in hotel lobbies. Easels can be printed with the system logo.
- Some hotels may be interested in displaying Circulator Visitor Guides in individual guest rooms. This approach was followed by the Sunday River Ski resort to distribute tabloid shuttle guides to hotel and condominium guests.
- Outdoor newspaper vending machines can be used for tabloid distribution in various downtown and Mall locations. This technique is used effectively to distribute Island Explorer visitor guides on the Bar Harbor Village Green.
- Centerfold information can be printed in an enlarged weatherproof format for mounting in outdoor metal sign frames.
- The National Park Service may want to incorporate a Circulator guide into other visitor publications. At Acadia National Park, the Island Explorer guide is inserted into the Park's tabloid "Beaver Log" publication as an additional sheet in the press run. In fact,

the Island Explorer visitor guide was designed from the start to match the layout and print specifications for the National Park Service tabloid publication.

Criteria for Measuring the Success of the Effort

The success of distribution efforts can be measured by developing a list of likely distribution locations and documenting the level of success at each site. Quantities disbursed by different distribution techniques can also be monitored.

Estimated Cost

The cost for clear plastic display easels is likely to be roughly \$5,000 for 1,000 easels.

“Honor rack” tabloid vending machines (for free distribution) cost approximately \$150 per unit.

Outdoor sign frames cost an estimated \$5,000 each.

Additional labor or contract costs will be incurred because someone must regularly check distribution points to ensure that ample supplies are on hand.

Implementation Calendar

Once a decision has been made to print a tabloid *Visitor Guide*, efforts to set up a distribution program should begin. This process is likely to take between 3 and 4 months. More lead time will likely be needed to determine appropriate locations for outdoor sign displays.

8.5.7 Ticket and Pass Sales

The Problem and the Solution

Advanced sale of fare media is not only critical to efficient vehicle operations, it is also critical to establishing awareness of the service in the minds of both visitors and local users, and is therefore critical to the success of the service. Negotiations with government agencies, private employers, and businesses and organizations dealing with visitors should be undertaken for bulk sales of passes.

For downtown employees using the circulator, circulator-only and circulator/Metro passes could be covered by the regular SmartBenefits program for non-federal workers, allowing existing employer transit benefits to be used for the circulator. Otherwise, bulk sales will need to be handled on a face-to-face basis. This will require direct and ongoing involvement of project marketing staff.

For visitors, single- and multi-day passes could be distributed through tour companies, hotels, the Convention Center, National Park Service, Smithsonian, and other tourist venues. Negotiations with each of these entities will be required. This will require direct and ongoing involvement of project marketing staff.

Criteria for Measuring the Success of the Effort

The success of advanced sales of fare media will be measured by the number and percentage of the various fare media that are sold off the vehicles.

Estimated Cost

The marketing cost for fare media sales will consist largely of staff time devoted to negotiating with businesses, government agencies, tour companies, hotels, the Park Service, museums, and other tourist venues.

Implementation Calendar

Negotiations with partners should take place between three and nine months prior to service implementation.

8.5.8 Summary of Marketing Cost Estimates

A summary of the initial costs for each of the individual marketing efforts is shown in Table 8-2. This does not include ongoing marketing costs, since much of the ongoing effort will be staff time for what is likely to be a full-time marketing person. This also does not include the cost of the effort to select and develop a final system name and identity.

Table 8-2: Summary of Initial Marketing Costs

Element	Initial Costs
Route Map Schematic	\$3,000 or more for design
Route-Specific Bus Stop Signs	\$4,500 for design \$20,000 for 120 signs
Web Site Promotions	\$10,000 for design
Posters for Metrorail Stations and Cars	\$3,000 - \$10,000 for design
Design of Tabloid <i>Visitor Guide</i>	\$10,000 for design \$5,000 for 100,000 copies
<i>Visitor Guide</i> Distribution	\$5,000 per frame for permanent displays Staff time for distribution
Ticket and Pass Sales	Staff time